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RUEHKM/AMEMBASSY KAMPALA PRIORITY 0938  
RUEHLO/AMEMBASSY LONDON PRIORITY 1761  
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C O N F I D E N T I A L NAIROBI 004694

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TAGS: [PGOV](#) [PREL](#) [KDEM](#) [KE](#)  
SUBJECT: MISPERCEPTIONS ABOUT THE US AROUND IN BANANA  
COUNTRY

Classified By: Ambassador William M. Bellamy for reasons 1.4 (b,d)

¶1. (C) SUMMARY: During a November 1 trip through Central Province, local leaders shared with the Ambassador their slanted, often erroneous, views on the U.S. relationship with Kenya and our role in the constitutional referendum process. While providing an excellent opportunity for the Ambassador to set the record straight with influential local residents, these conversations offered useful (if sometimes disturbing) insight into the thinking of the mostly Kikuyu pro-NARC government region. END SUMMARY.

A SMALL DONATION GOES A LONG WAY  
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¶2. (U) On November 1, the Ambassador traveled to Central and Eastern Provinces, stopping in Embu to dedicate three Ambassador's Self Help Fund-donated milk coolers, and in Thika to visit a PEPFAR-funded HIV treatment clinic. In Embu, both Provincial Commissioner John Nandasaba and District Commissioner Shadrack Mwadime emphasized the need for greater economic development in the area. They cited particular needs for market access for local farmers, investment in the tea and coffee industries, and irrigation. Speaking at the milk cooler dedication, local officials and farmers praised the significant impact the Embassy's donation had made in providing a steady source of income for some whose herds were as small as one or two cows. In Thika, the Ambassador toured the District Hospital and met with health care workers implementing a program to reduce mother to child HIV transmission with funding from PEPFAR.

MYTH, LEGEND, AND MISPERCEPTION  
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¶3. (U) In Nyeri, a principal urban center of Central Province, the Ambassador hosted lunch for representatives of the major Christian churches in Kenya, a former mayor of the city, and a prominent local lawyer. Much of the conversation centered on why, in the guests' minds, the U.S. is working against the ruling NARC government. The Reverend Charles Ndanyu, Moderator of the Presbyterian Church of East Africa in Nyeri challenged the Ambassador on reports that the U.S. sees Kenya as a failed state. Wilson Wanyoike, Central Province Coordinator for the National Christian Council of Kenya, added that in connection with the travel advisory, Kenyans had the view that the U.S. was "hostile." The Ambassador explained that the failed state report (widely covered in local media) came from a little-known independent

organization. He also clarified the purpose of and impetus for the travel advisory, noting that tourism from the U.S. was at a record high.

14. (U) Father Anthony Munene, Moderator of the Catholic Archdiocese of Mount Kenya, wondered why in his 2005 Fourth of July remarks the Ambassador had called for regime change in Kenya. (NOTE: The Ambassador had not called for regime change, but the Information Minister, in his official response, queried whether the U.S. was seeking regime change in Kenya. END NOTE) Wanyoike added that Kenyans "at the grass roots" have the opinion that the U.S. is "uncomfortable" working with the NARC government, and that the U.S. is more inclined towards "the other end." The Ambassador responded that such allegations were entirely false. He pointed out in particular that there was no good reason why the U.S. should be more concerned with corruption in Kenya than Kenyans.

15. (U) The conversation shifted, almost inevitably, to area MP Chris Murungaru. James Mararo, NARC District Chairman and former mayor of Nyeri, recounted his version of the history behind the UK's refusal to allow the MP to travel to Britain, saying it was because Murungaru had changed his official vehicle from a Land Rover to a Toyota. Mararo wondered what similar offense Murungaru had committed against the U.S. The lunch attendees also asked why the U.S. wanted Kenya to sign an Article 98 agreement, "in violation of international law." The Ambassador explained our policy on corruption and service members overseas.

UNQUESTIONABLY BANANA  
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16. (U) Equally unsurprising, G.K. Kibera, former chair of the Law Society of Kenya (LSK) asked the question which the many media members present in Embu had repeatedly raised: Was the U.S. "flirting" with the Orange ("No") side in the upcoming constitutional referendum? Kibera confirmed that in Kenya, voting has a particular geographic dimension that will be evident on November 21.

17. (U) Finally able to pose a question of his own, the Ambassador asked if the Constituency Development Fund program had been effective. Father Munene remarked that while implementation was poor, the plan to try to spread development to all areas was an encouraging step. The practice of providing government resources to all Members of Parliament for their constituencies, irrespective of party affiliation, demonstrated a new level of political sophistication.

18. (C) COMMENT: The Ambassador's conversations in Central Province demonstrate the extent to which Kenyans will vote on November 21 based on tribal, and thus regional, affiliation. Pockets of the country have become solidly Orange ("No") or Banana ("Yes") along expected lines. Comments in Nyeri also reveal the depth of paranoia about U.S. policy in, and intentions towards, Kenya among well-educated and influential Kenyans in the Kikuyu heartland. At the end of the Nyeri conversation, the lunch guests seemed quite at ease, willing to accept our arguments, and eager for further contact and discussion. The trip to Central Province illustrates the advantage of face-to-face contacts with elites outside of Nairobi. END COMMENT.  
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